

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 20347

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJ: CONCORDE

REF: PARIS 20273

1. REFTEL REPORTED PCF AND RPR DEMANDS FOR RETALIATORY ACTION IN FRANCE AGAINST U.S. FOLLOWING NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY'S ACTION LAST WEEK EXTENDING ITS "TEMPORARY" BAN ON CONCORDE. HARMFUL THOUGH SUCH ACTION MIGHT BE IF IT WERE TO TAKE THE FORM OF A BOYCOTT AGAINST U.S. CARRIERS IN FRANCE, ITS SIGNIFICANCE WOULD BE DWARFED BY WHAT I HEAR ARE PLANS UNDER WAY WITHIN THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION TO BRING INDIRECT PRESSURE TO BEAR ON US, SPECIFICALLY BY MEANS OF RESTRICTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST AMERICAN LAWYERS AND BANKERS DOING BUSINESS IN FRANCE. THIS WOULD BE DONE IN THE BELIEF THAT AMERICAN LEGAL AND BANKING INTERESTS MIGHT HAVE THE GREATEST CLOUT IN BRINGING PRESSURE TO BEAR IN TURN, IN WASHINGTON AS WELL AS NEW YORK, TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION FAVORABLY FOR CONCORDE.

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2. WITHOUT MINIMIZING THE IMPACT OF HIS WORDS I DO NOT ATTACH UNDUE IMPORTANCE TO THE FACT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD RAISED THE QUESTION OF CONCORDE DURING MY INITIAL COURTESY CALL (PARIS 19955). THIS WAS AFTER ALL TO BE EXPECTED. HOWEVER, THE MORE I REFLECT ON THE PORT AUTHORITY DECISION OF LAST WEEK AND ITS MUCH EVIDENT SHORTCOMINGS, THE MORE I AM CONVINCED THAT THE

FRENCH ARE AT THE LIMIT OF THEIR PATIENCE. AND THEIR FRUSTRATION IS MORE THAN UNDERSTANDABLE. THE FRENCH HAVE THE SAME INFORMATION THAT WE DO AND IT INCREASINGLY POINTS TO DISCRIMINATION. THE PORT AUTHORITY HAS EVIDENTLY REJECTED NOISE STANDARDS THAT WOULD HIT OLD 707S AND DC8S AND THEY ARE NOW TALKING ABOUT STANDARDS THAT WOULD APPLY ONLY TO SSTs. I REALIZE THAT NEW AMERICAN AIRCRAFT ARE QUIETER BUT IF THE CONCORDE IS TO BE REJECTED WHILE OLDER, NOISIER AMERICAN-MADE PLANES ARE ALLOWED TO FLY, THIS WILL CERTAINLY LEAD TO AN EVEN MORE DETERMINED EFFORT HERE TO HIT BACK.

3. CONCORDE IS A PESKY QUESTION THAT HAS BEEN WITH US FOR A LONG TIME. IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE, HOWEVER, I SUGGEST THAT IT MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF OUR GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW THE SITUATION ONCE MORE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS DONE ALL THAT IT COULD DO TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION IN NEW YORK AND THAT IT DOES SO IN FULL AWARENESS OF THE POTENTIAL THAT THE CONCORDE ISSUE HAS TO DO SERIOUS MISCHIEF AND, INDEED, PERHAPS IRREPARABLE HARM TO FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. IF CONCORDE CONTINUES TO BE BANNED FROM NEW YORK, AND SHOULD THAT BAN BECOME DEFINITIVE, THEN THE FRENCH -- AND ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD -- WILL GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO FIND WAYS TO BE MEAN TO US, AND THERE

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ARE MANY POLICY AREAS OF VITAL INTEREST TO US WHERE WE NEED FRENCH GOODWILL AND SUPPORT.
HARTMAN

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